

Remarks

This Amendment is submitted in response to the office action mailed September 26, 2007, in connection with the above-identified application (hereinafter, the "Office Action"). The Office Action provided a three-month shortened statutory period in which to respond, ending on December 26, 2007. Submitted herewith is a Petition for a Two-Month Extension of Time extending the due date to February 26, 2008. Accordingly, this Amendment is timely submitted.

Claims 1 through 23 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request the entry of the amendments to Claims 1 through 3, 6, and 8 through 11. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the pending claims do not introduce any new matter.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102/103

Claims 1 through 23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Armstrong et al., "Examination of ionic liquids and their interactions with molecules, when used as stationary phases in gas chromatography", Anal. Chem. 199, 71, 3873-3876 ("Armstrong") or alternatively under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Armstrong in view of JP-4215062 ("JP Abstract").

Applicants wish to cancel claims 19 to 23 without prejudice. Applicants reserve the right to prosecute the subject matter in the claims in a later related application.

Applicants wish to take the opportunity to further explain the present invention. An analytical process such as gas chromatography may include several different process steps, for example, sampling, sample preparation, separation and detection. The present invention focuses on the sample preparation step in which the sample or compound to be analyzed is, e.g., dissolved in the ionic liquid prior. Only after this initial sample preparation step is the sample then separated via the chromatography.

In comparison, Armstrong focuses on the separation step in which the ionic liquids as a part of the stationary phase, i.e., as a coating on the inner surface of the fused silica capillaries. Armstrong does not use the ionic liquids for the preparation of the sample to be analyzed. Thus, the present invention and Armstrong are using ionic liquids for different purposes and at different times during the analytical process.

Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to highlight the use of ionic liquids for preparing a sample for analysis by headspace gas chromatography. Support for such an amendment can be found in the examples in which the samples are dissolved in the ionic liquids prior to headspace gas chromatography.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully submit that amended Claim 1 is patentable over Armstrong in view of the JP Abstract. One of the elements to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness is that the combined references teach or suggest every claim limitation. Armstrong

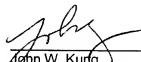
fails to teach or suggest the use of ionic liquids in sample preparation prior to gas chromatography. Likewise, the JP Abstract also fails to teach or suggest the use of ionic liquids, i.e. molten salts, in sample preparation.

Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 2 through 18 are in condition for allowance as they depend from an allowable independent base claim.

Thus, in view of the foregoing arguments Applicants respectfully request that the claims of the present application be reconsidered. If a telephone interview would be of assistance in advancing the prosecution of this application, Applicants' undersigned attorney invites the Examiner to telephone him at the telephone number provided below.

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